



# The Holy See

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## ***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE NATIONAL HUNGARIAN PILGRIMAGE***

*Monday, 9 October 2000*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!*

1. I wish to extend a cordial welcome to each one of you, dear Hungarian pilgrims. With fraternal affection I greet Cardinal László Paskai and Archbishop István Seregély, President of the Hungarian Episcopal Conference, whom I thank for the noble words that he wished to address to me on behalf of those present and of the entire Church in Hungary. With them I greet my venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, who are leading you in this special experience of faith and grace.

My respectful greeting also goes to Ambassador Pál Tar, whose presence offers yet another proof of the positive collaboration between the Catholic Church and the State authorities in your country after the difficult years of communist dictatorship.

Thank you for this visit, which renews and strengthens the ancient fidelity of the Magyar people to the See of Peter! Thank you for the affection that you show me again on this occasion!

2. Your national pilgrimage began in front of the Sacristy of the Vatican Basilica with the blessing of a plaque. It recalls the place where the first house for Hungarian pilgrims was located, a house founded 1,000 years ago by King St Stephen, who wanted it to be near the tomb of the Apostle St Peter precisely because he wished the Hungarian pilgrims, on coming to Rome, to renew their fidelity and love for Peter. This solemn act fittingly links the two extraordinary events you are celebrating in the year 2000: the Great Jubilee of Christianity and the Millennium of Hungary, which are also the special reasons for this pilgrimage.

You came in a large group to the Eternal City to visit the tombs of the Apostles and to confirm your faith at your meeting with Peter's Successor. Your presence in such great numbers attests to the Magyar people's constant loyalty to the Holy See, which began with Pope Sylvester II giving a crown to King St Stephen and represents a fundamental element of your history and culture.

As I recalled in the Message which I sent to you on the occasion of the celebration of the Magyar Millennium, your "history begins with a holy king, rather, with a 'holy family'.... This seed would sprout and bring forth a host of noble figures who would distinguish *Pannonia Sacra*"; over the centuries it would become "Christianity's bulwark against the invasion of the Tartars and Turks" (*Message of John Paul II to the Hungarian People*, 20 August 2000, n. 1).

These events left deep marks in your culture, which are expressed in some everyday practices such as the pealing of bells at midday which, since the victory over the Islamic Turks, invites Hungarian Christians to interrupt their work to spend a few moments in prayer. The special relationship binding your people to the See of Peter finds a significant expression in the Hungarian Chapel of the Vatican Grottoes, which I myself had the joy of blessing 20 years ago on the feast of the *Magna Domina Hungarorum*, to whom you also wished to entrust your Jubilee pilgrimage.

3. The solemn celebrations of the Great Jubilee of the Incarnation and of the Hungarian Millennium urge you to give thanks to the Lord for the wonders he has worked among your people. They also represent a valuable opportunity for conversion and for commitment to building a future that is worthy of your faith and of your glorious past, and finds one of its essential elements in the family.

Today this basic institution of human society is undergoing a difficult crisis, which seems to demonstrate a disregard for fundamental human and Christian values, essential factors for the civil and moral progress of mankind. However it also reveals the profound changes taking place in society, which can be the sign of a new beginning. It is important therefore that Christians view this crisis with confidence and hope. For the complex problems affecting the family institution must prompt believers to rediscover and live the values of marriage and the family as they are proposed by the Church, in order to give a new impetus to building the civilization of love. In this regard, I wish to repeat the invitation that I addressed to you on the occasion of the celebration of your Millennium: "Be conscious of the centrality of the family for a well-ordered and flourishing society.

Promote wise programmes, therefore, to protect its soundness and integrity. Only a nation that can count on stable, healthy families can survive and write a great history, as you did in the past" (*ibid*, n. 4).

This special care for the family will lead you to promote the culture of life at every level. This culture demands the defence of the human person from conception until death, support for the value of fatherhood and motherhood, as well as recognition of the role played by women in domestic work and in the education of children.

4. The solemn celebrations of the Hungarian Millennium coincided with the *15th World Youth Day*, which saw an extraordinary participation of young people from all over the world. A considerable number of young Hungarians also attended that gathering. They wished to share their faith and their search for Christ, the One who gives meaning to life, with their contemporaries.

May the witness of these young people, their enthusiasm and their joyful faith be a sign of hope for everyone, instilling courage and urging us not to be afraid of the future.

May their presence in your churches also open a horizon full of promise for your homeland and be the harbinger of a

better future.

5. Dear Hungarian pilgrims, I hope that, strengthened by the grace of the Jubilee, you can build in your nation a more just and fraternal society, worthy of your faith and of your deep Christian roots.

With these wishes, as I entrust you to the maternal protection of the *Magna Domina Hungarorum*, as St Stephen once did, I impart to each of you and to the beloved Hungarian people a special Apostolic Blessing.

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